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THE CONCEPTION OF EMPIRE IN ANCIENT INDIA

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Calcutta rightly holds the pride of place among the foremost centres of Indian studies, and I feel it an honour to have been called upon to preside over the proceedings of a section at a session of the Indian History Congress held under the auspices of the University of Calcutta.

As our section relates to the Ancient Imperial period, I think it proper to begin our proceedings with some reflections on the conception of Empire in Ancient India. All division of history into periods is a necessary, but arbitrary, process, and the title of our section is meant to include the fifteen centuries between the rise of the Mauryan Empire and the fall of the Cōḷas.

The earliest empires of which we have any detailed descriptions are more or less legendary, and may well be held to fall outside the scope of our field of enquiry. Such was the empire of the Ikṣvākus of Ayodhyā, whose sway is said to have comprised the whole earth :

sarvā pūrvam iyaṃ yeṣām āsīt kṛtsnā vasundharā.

Again the descriptions of Yudhiṣṭhira's rule in the *Mahābhārata*, particularly the *digvijaya* undertaken on his account, once before the *rājasūya* and later in relation to his *aśvamedha*, may be recalled ; Yudhiṣṭhira tells Śrī Kṛṣṇa just before the *rājasūya* :

tvatkṛte pṛthivī sarvā madvaśe Kṛṣṇa vartate,[1]

[1] *Mbh.* II. 36.18 (Bombay).

a statement which should perhaps be understood in the light of Arjuna's *pratijñā* at the beginning of the *digvijaya*, viz.:

karaṁ āharayiṣyāmi rājñas-sarvān nṛpottama.[1]

Then we have the story of Pṛthu Vainya himself narrated elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*; this story is connected with the origin of monarchy and it was after him that the earth came to be called *pṛthivī*. How the expression 'the whole earth' must be understood in these contexts, and what the nature of the rule was in its extension to outlying lands, are questions that are not perhaps capable of being decided on the basis of evidence that modern historians will accept as decisive. Beyond a vague acknowledgement of suzerainty and a payment, either a contribution to an imperial sacrifice or a periodical tribute, these 'conquests' did not mean much. And if we may accept Kālidāsa's treatment of Raghu's *digvijaya* as an implied comment on such antique traditions, we may have to take rather modest views of such passages.

In any case, the idea of Empire in the sense of a single power extending and maintaining its rule over a number of peoples belonging to different races was unknown to Ancient India. The racial and cultural unity of the many kingdoms of India had been established before the rise of the Mauryan Empire, and nothing happened to disturb the prevalent cultural harmony till the advent of Islam into India. We shall search the annals of Ancient India in vain for any indications of Imperialism of the type developed in other lands and ages. There was no belief that the lord of big battalions had a duty to impose the culture of his people on weaker peoples; there was no systematic attempt to exploit subject countries economically. Nothing can be farther from these than the quiet tone in which Aśoka records the despatch of his missions for the preaching of *dhamma* in alien lands.

[1] II. 26. 5 (Bombay).

The Indian conception of Empire was closely bound up with that of *cakravartin*, and it would be well worth our while to consider this term with some care. Many explanations of it have been offered, and each of them may be seen to give some one aspect of this rather complex notion. It seems to have had a long history, and gathered many accretions round itself in the course of centuries; but I do not think we are yet in a position to trace the stages of this development with any precision.

With characteristic terseness Amarasimha defines the different classes or rulers as follows:

> rājā tu praṇatāśeṣa-sāmantaḥ syādadhīśvaraḥ
> cakravartī sārvabhaumo nṛpo'nyo maṇḍaleśvaraḥ ।
> yeneṣṭaṃ rājasūyena maṇḍalasyeśvaraśca yaḥ
> śāsti yaścājñayā rājñas-sa samrāṭ ॥

We have here in ascending order *rājā, adhīśvara, maṇḍaleśvara, samrāṭ, cakravartin*, constituting a hierarchy of different grades of monarchs. Amarasimha's definitions are doubtless the reflection of a long-established tradition on the subject. A cakravartin was a universal sovereign. The whole world was his kingdom, and Bharata was the first of cakravartins according to one line of tradition.[1] Amarasimha, it seems, had in his mind the verses in the *Śakuntalopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata* on Bharata:[2]

> Duṣyantas tu tadā rājā putraṃ Śākuntalaṃ tadā ।
> Bharataṃ nāmataḥ kṛtvā yauvarājye'bhyaṣecayat ॥
> tasya tat prathitaṃ cakram prāvarttata mahātmanaḥ ।
> bhāsvaraṃ divyamajitaṃ lokasannādanam mahat ॥
> sa vijitya mahīpālāṃścakāra vaśavarttinaḥ ।
> cacāra ca satāṃ dharmmam prāpa cānuttamaṃ yaśaḥ ॥
> sa rājā *cakravartyāsīt sārvvabhaumaḥ* pratāpavān ।
> īje ca bahubhiryajñairyathā Śakro marutpatiḥ ॥

[1] In *Maitrāyaṇī Up.* I. 4 there is a list of cakravartins among Mahādhanurdharas, and Bharata's name is placed last in this list. The *Ait. Br.* VIII. 4. 1 adumbrates the ideal of sārvabhauma.

[2] *Mbh.* (Calcutta Edn. 1834), I. 74. vv. 3118-22 = (Bombay Edn. 1906), I. end of Ch. 100 and beginning of Ch. 101, with some variations.

yājayāmāsa taṃ Kaṇvo vidhivad-bhūri-dakṣiṇam ।
śrīmad govitataṃ nāma vājimedham avāpa saḥ ।
yasmin sahasraṃ padmānāṃ Kaṇvāya Bharato dadau ॥

Here we have all the elements making up the idea of *cakravartin*, and the doubt about the exact significance of the *cakra* is also there. Kālidāsa, the wisest interpreter of the imperial ideals of the Gupta Age, interprets the *cakra* as the wheel of the royal chariot. He says of Bharata : [1]

rathenā'nutkhātas timitagatinā tīrṇajaladhiḥ
purā saptadvīpāṃ jayati vasudhām apratirathaḥ ।

Let us note also that he includes not only the whole of India, but the entire world in the empire of Bharata. In his *Raghuvaṃśa* again his general description of the Raghus in the phrases *āsamudrakṣitīśānām*, *ānākarathavartmanām*, and *yaśase vijigīṣūṇām* is also an unmistakable echo of the Mahābhārata passage cited above.

Such seems to be the most authoritative interpretation of the conception as it obtained in the heyday of ' Hindu Superiority.' This becomes clear also from the epithets usually applied to Samudragupta in early Gupta inscriptions, viz., *sarvvarājocchettuḥ*, *pṛthivyām-apratirathasya caturudadhi-salil-āsvāditayaśasaḥ*.

In the face of so much evidence on the ancient interpretation of the term, we need not hesitate to regard as mere unsubstantial guesses some of the explanations offered in modern lexicons and cyclopædias. I have in mind such statements as *cakram pṛthvīcakram vartate tena* (*Śabdakalpadruma*), or *cakre bhūmaṇḍale vartitum, cakram sainyacakram vā sarvva-bhūmau varttayitum śīlam asya* (*Vācaspatya*).

More respectable is the explanation of *cakra* as *maṇḍala*, a group of states related in a particular manner (of which a little more will be said presently), or, more generally, a group of persons

1 *Śākuntala*, Act VII, v. 33.

engaged in some common enterprise as in the often-cited phrase from the *Gītagovinda*: *padmāvatīcaraṇa-cāraṇa-cakravartī*. This explanation of *cakra* as *maṇḍala* has the high authority of Śrīdhara in its favour.

Two other interpretations of *cakra* bring it into close connection with the mythology of Jainism and Buddhism. One of them considers the *cakra* to be a lotus or wheel traced by the natural lines in the palm of a man's hand, *cakram padmākāra-śubhacihnam kare vartate yasya* (*Śabdakalpadruma*), a mark of sovereignty. The *Bhojacampū* makes a striking use of this concept in the verse:

> rekhā-rathāṅga-sarasīruha-śaṅkha-cihne
> kṣemaṅkare tava kare jagatāṃ trayāṇām ।
> kāntārakanda khananam racayehi nūnam
> ābaddhavān pratisaram bhagavān Vasiṣṭhaḥ ॥

This idea of a lotus, wheel and conch marked by natural lines on the palm of a born emperor, borders on the notion of a *mahāpuruṣa* distinguished from ordinary mortals by thirty-two bodily marks, and destined to be either a *cakravartin* or a *jina*.

The other interpretation is offered by the *Abhidhānarājendra* in the statement: *cakreṇa ratnabhūtena praharaṇa-viśeṣeṇa vartitum śīlam asya*. This may well be the idea behind the verse from the Mahābhārata cited above regarding the *bhāsvaram divyam ajitam cakram*. This idea of the *cakra* of 1,000 radii (*sahasrāram*) preceding the conquering hero through the air on his conquest of the world occupies a considerable place in Jaina and Bauddha mythology.[1] On the one side this *cakra* as an instrument of war connects itself with the discus of Viṣṇu, of solar origin, and a whole cycle of solar myths. On the other, the conquering wheel of the cakravarti is the political parallel to the wheel of Dharma (Dharmacakra) of the Buddha which too rolls

[1] Jacobi in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, s. v. cakravartin. Jacobi notes that the *cakra* does not figure as such in any list of the seven or fourteen (mahā)ratnas attributed to cakravartis of different sorts by different authorities,

freely everywhere and which no one is able to turn back. And the parallelism between the cakravartin and the Buddha is carried, as is well known, to the disposal of their remains at their death in a stūpa.[1]

On the political side, the conquering wheel is sometimes replaced by the *ājñā-cakra*, and a famous verse at the opening of the *Silappadikāram* affirms that the wheel of command of the Cōḷa ruler emulates the Sun in its free revolutions round the Meru mountain.

Pali Buddhist literature bridges the gap between mythology and realism by recognising three sorts of *cakravartins*, the cakkavālacakkavatti, dipacakkavatti and padésacakkavatti, who rule respectively the four great continents comprising the entire world, only one continent, and a part of one continent.[2] Burnouf's comment on a similar classification found in the first chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* is noteworthy: 'On peut dire que les trois titres *Maṇḍalins*, *Balatchakravartins*, et *Tchaturdvīpa tchakravartins*, expriment une domination de plus en plus étendue jusqu'à devenir fabuleuse. Ainsi les *Maṇḍalins* sont les souverains d'un royaume dit *maṇḍala*; ce sont probablement les rois ordinaires. Les *Balatchakravartins* sont des souverains de plusieurs royaumes, et leur puissance est, à ce qu'il paraît, soutenue par une armée ou une force (*bala*) qui leur assure la victoire. Enfin les *Tchaturdvīpa tchakravartins* sont des monarques souverains dont la fabuleuse domination s'étend sur les quatre iles dont la réunion forme la terre suivant l'opinion des Buddhistes.'[3]

Was the *cakravartin* conceived of as a divinity? *Avatāras* like Rāma being excepted, I think this question must be answered in the negative. No Indian king ever called himself 'Theos' or 'Epiphanes,' and none was worshipped as a god in his life-time.

1 *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. II, pp. 92-93; Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 54.
2 Childers.
3 *Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, i, pp. 307-08.

The apotheosis of dead rulers more often found in South India and the Overseas Colonies than in the rest of India constitutes an aspect of Śaivism, a religious phenomenon, that seems to have little or no bearing on the present issue. The Indian monarch may be a '*devānāmpriya*' (the chosen of the gods), or *Dhanadendravaruṇāntaka-sama* (Samudragupta), but is never a *deva*, much less a *devadeva*. The deified king of the Hellenistic period who anticipated the Emperor worship of the Early Roman Empire has no counterpart in India. It used to be said that he was a gift of the Asiatic provinces of Alexander to Hellenism; recently, it has been pointed out [1] with some emphasis that 'in Asia there was little soil for deification of rulers to germinate,' and that this was a native product of Greece, evolved to meet 'the need of finding a legal basis in a constitutional state for an extra-constitutional authority.' However that may be, India did not know a god-king.[2]

Bharata is said to have performed the aśvamedha, and this gorgeous sacrifice was always looked upon as the symbol of the imperial position of its performer.[3] Puṣyamitra Śuṅga is the first monarch known to have performed this sacrifice in historical times, and since his time many a conqueror has taken credit for having revived the ceremony after it had gone out of use for a

[1] By W. S. Ferguson, CAH, vii, p. 15.

[2] I think the rhetorical statements in Manu, ch. vii, 4-12, and particularly the downright verse 8—*bālo'pi nāvamantavyo manuṣya iti bhūmipaḥ mahatī devatā hyeṣā nararūpeṇa tiṣṭhati*—do not really contradict our view. The context shows that the aim of the author is only to stress the necessity of upholding monarchy; and much of what he says here should be understood not literally, but as an *arthavāda*. He is even more rhetorical in praise of *Daṇḍa* (14-28) and goes so far as to say that it destroys the king himself when he fails in his duty: *dharmādvicalitaṃ hanti nṛpameva sabāndhavam* (28). The other books on polity sail clear of all this, particularly the great work going under the name of *Yājñavalkya* (I. 309-11). Manu himself frankly repudiates the notion of *plenary imperium* like all the rest when he comes to discuss the duties of the king and says: *sve sve dharme niviṣṭānāṃ sarveṣāmanupūrvaśah varṇanām āśramāṇāṃ ca rājā sṛṣṭo'bhirakṣitā* (vii. 35).

[3] The *locus classicus* on the earliest performers of Aśvamedha is doubtless *Aitareya Br.* VIII. 4. 7 ff.—Keith, RV Brahmanas, pp. 336 ff. The Rājasūya and Viśvajit were other sacrifices also signifying the imperial position of the performer.

time, and Samudragupta gloried in calling himself '*Aśvamedha-parākramaḥ*.' This sacrifice was, however, not popular in South India, and the Cōḷas performed it but once.

The ideal of the Indian king was that of a *vijigīṣu*, conqueror of neighbouring powers. The *Mahābhārata* roundly asserts: *Kṣātraṃ dharmaṃ śreṣṭhatamaṃ vadanti*, [1] and *vīryaśreṣṭhā rājadharmā matā me*; the *Manusmṛti* speaks of *yodhadharmaḥ sanātanaḥ*.[3] Preparedness for war and exhibition of valour are enjoined on kings at all times:

nityamudyata-daṇḍaḥ syāt nityaṃ vivṛta-pauruṣaḥ. [4]

A king can easily be too much of a peace-lover, and then the excess of his virtue would cause sure trouble to himself and his state:

sadaiva tvāṃ mṛduprajñaṃ
atyāryam atidhārmikam
klībaṃ dharmaghṛṇāyuktaṃ
na loko bahumanyate. [5]

The diplomatic relations among states conformed to this simple view of the king's duty that he must ever be the hammer to his neighbours in order to escape himself becoming the anvil, and the quasi-academic theory of the *maṇḍala* is just a mechanical arrangement of the neighbouring states in relation to the *vijigīṣu* in the order of *arirmitram-arermitram* [6] and so on. Every king has a duty to be a *vijigīṣu* and his *maṇḍala* is constituted in the same manner as that of another. This was no mere maxim of text-books; it seems actually to have influenced the conduct of Indian kings, and its influence goes a long way to explain the history of war and peace in India through long stretches of time.

1 (Bombay Edn.) Śānti. 63. 21.
2 *ib*. 64. 12.
3 VII. 98.
4 *ib*. 102.
5 *Mbh*. Śānti. 75. 19.
6 *Kāmandaka*. VIII. 16; *Yāj*. I. 345.

Indian history is quite a good part of it a chaos of conflicting *vijigīṣās*. The underlying motive of it all is the discharge of the *kṣatriya dharma*, the quest of glory (*yaśas*) by exhibition of valour (*parākrama*).

Let us now turn to war as an instrument of policy and a means of conquest. A surprising realism characterises the treatment of this subject in our books. The king is advised to avoid risking the chances of war :

varjanīyaṃ sadā yuddhaṃ rājyakāmena dhīmatā [1]

says the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Manusmṛti* is even more explicit :

anityo vijayo yasmād-dṛśyate yudhyamānayoḥ
parājayaśca saṁgrāme tasmād yuddhaṃ vivarjayet.

These statements do not mean that the *vijigīṣu* is asked to turn pacifist, or forgo his aims of aggression ; but only that he should secure his ends preferably by other means, and in the *Mahābhārata* Bhīṣma completes the statement just cited by adding :

upāyaistribhirādānam arthasyāha Bṛhaspatiḥ[2]

Again, the king is frankly advised to direct his energies against his weaker neighbours, leaving the strong ones alone :

abalānabhiyuñjīta na tu ye balavattarāḥ.[3]

Lastly once war begins, there are practically no limits to what may be done to secure victory. Violence, oppression, corruption, propaganda are all permitted.[4] It is often said that while wars were being fought by the Kṣatriyas among themselves in India, the peasant continued to till the land peacefully and the merchant to trade undisturbed. Only the other day a military correspondent reported from the Western Front that even in Hitler's

1 *Mbh.* Śānti. 68. 25.
2 *Cf. Manusmṛti*, VII. 198.
3 *Mbh.* Śānti. 93. 23.
4 *Manusmṛti*, VII. 195-97.

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war the French peasant goes on tilling the soil as the guns are going off within his earshot. Such observations may be a compliment to the patience of the peasant or the enterprise of the trader; they can hardly be accepted literally, and must be held to underrate the suffering and misery caused by war. Rules of war, constituting an excellent code of honour among combatants, there were; and we have no reason to believe that good soldiers did not observe them. But this did not affect the general population.

This frank realism of our political treatises on war as an instrument of policy is in striking contrast to the constant preoccupation of modern European nations to give themselves a better character than their practices warrant. The cold abstract statements of our books seem to cast a deeper shade of darkness on a picture sufficiently dark in itself. We find states often enough intriguing and fighting against neighbouring states in the course of Indian history; and I do not wish to gainsay the influence of theory and practice on each other. But the annals of ancient India, with all their strife and war, fall far short of the cold-blooded code adumbrated by the theories of *maṇḍala* on the one side, and the employment of *daṇḍa* (war) as an *upāya* on the other. Logic and system-making occasionally lead to results strangely out of touch with the facts of life; the theory of mixed castes elaborated with meticulous care in our law books is a case in point; this may be just another. However that may be, sufficient mischief was done by the notion of *maṇḍala*, and India remained permanently divided against itself.

We turn next to the policy of the conqueror in the conquered states. Both theory and the facts of history enable us to gain a satisfactory view of this aspect of our subject. Our books on Polity explain the nature of Ancient Indian Imperialism both by their omissions and by their express statements. On the processes by which empires were formed they have little to say, and on methods of Imperial administration, nothing—

which, by the way, shows that no inference regarding the date of the *Arthaśāstra* can be based on the fact that it deals with the polity of a small state. We have in fact no books on the polity of a large state or empire, and the *Arthaśāstra*, at least, contains a unique statement about cakravartikṣetram,[1] which clearly envisages India as a geographical and cultural unit, and rescues the conception of cakravartin from its vague mythical associations by confining it to India proper.

When an Indian empire was established, it made little difference to the lives of the people of its component parts, which went on as before. Yājñavalkya expressly states that when the conquest of a country was completed nothing in it was to be changed, and the king was to respect local customs and institutions as if they were those of his home country :

> ya eva nṛpaterdharmaḥ svarāṣṭraparipālane |
> tameva kṛtsnam āpnoti para-rāṣṭraṃ vaśaṃ nayan ||
> yasmin deśe ya ācāro vyavahāraḥ kulasthitiḥ |
> tathaiva paripālyo'sau yadā vaśam-upāgataḥ. ||

To some extent this is true of all types of imperialism. 'Rome consistently refrained from wanton interference with the native institutions of her peoples ' ; [2] British rule in India has been no less chary of unduly meddling with ancient customs and practices. But ancient Indian imperialism went farther in the direction of non-interference. There was no consciousness of cultural superiority on the part of the conqueror and his followers over the conquered; and in a social *milieu* which exalted stability above change, the conqueror was strictly enjoined to maintain the *status quo*. It was thus that three centuries after the con-

[1] Adhi. IX, chapter i : 'Dēśaḥ pṛthivī tasyām Himavatsamudrāntaram udīcīnam yojanasahasram tiryak cakravartikṣetram.' Both Jolly and Shama Sastri read *atiryak* for *tiryak*; but I think it is a mistake. Both Mādhava Yajva (*Nayacandrikā*) and J. J. Meyer read *tiryak*. I would follow the *Nayacandrikā* and translate the passage as follows : 'Deśa refers to the Earth. And in it, the land which extends north to south from the Himālaya to the Sea, and measures a thousand yojanas across, is the field of the cakravartin.'

[2] Hugh Last in CAH, xi, p. 448.

quest of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom by Parāntaka I there was still a Pāṇḍya ready to turn the tables on the Cōḷas when he got the chance.

Samudragupta's victorious march into the Deccan and Rājendra Cōḷa's expedition to the Ganges are the most conspicuous examples of the sheer exhibition of *parākrama* on the part of great rulers ; they led to no permanent results : they were not meant to do so. But the vanity of the conqueror was satisfied ; witness the eulogium of Hariṣeṇa, or the gusto with which the construction of the great tank Cōḷagaṅgam, a *jalamayam jaya-stambham,* is celebrated in the Tiruvālaṅgāḍu plates.

The Mauryan, Gupta and Cōḷa empires were the most important imperial polities that flourished in our period ; most of the other ' empires ' were more or less local and short-lived expansions of particular kingdoms that followed the same lines of organisation as the larger empires. At its best, the Indian imperial organisation was a sort of sheath encasing the pre-existing political institutions of the original kingdoms that had been drawn into the empire : when the empire came to an end, the old states continued their normal existence. The emperor, an army and a bureaucracy controlled from the centre were the chief bonds of unity in the empire, princes of the emperor's family holding viceregal positions and carrying the pomp and circumstance of imperial royalty into the provinces.

The empires did maintain standing armies adequate to their needs, and whenever necessary they were expanded by levies from vassals and warlike tribes and by the employment of mercenary forces. Long and well-made roads for the movement of troops and military colonies at strategic points were not unknown. But on the whole the empires of India excelled not so much by the strength of their military organisation or the ubiquity of the cleruchy as by their pursuits in the realms of culture and art. What the cleruchy was to the military empires of the ancient Western world, the agrāhara was to their Indian counterparts. Not soldiers, but groups of learned men, were enabled, by the

multiplication of these foundations, to go and spread the light of their learning and the ideals of the good and noble life in almost every township and village in the country. The temple, the vihāra and the maṭha were other creations of our culture that gained greatly by the rise of empires, and repaid a hundredfold the pious attentions lavished on them by our rulers. The results of the wider peace established by the Indian empires and the fuller opportunities opened out by them for the self-expression of the people are to be traced, not in the political subjection or economic ruin of other nations, but in the eagerness of our people to seek contacts with the outside world, to learn from the foreigner as well as to teach him—all in a friendly way—in the greater refinement of our architecture and the arts, and in the maturer forms of our literary creations. Among the most characteristic contributions of the empires of Ancient India to the sum of human happiness must be counted things like the religious and artistic influence that flowed on the kingdoms of the Southern Sea from the Pāla empire of Bengal ; and the interesting and durable pattern of autonomous village government fostered and perfected, if not originated, by the Cōḷas.

The Āndhras, Pallavas and Cōḷas are to be counted among the Indian powers known to have pursued an active naval policy. From the sixteenth century onwards the command of the world's seas has been held almost exclusively by European nations, and this has led to a depreciation of the maritime achievements of non-European peoples in earlier times. But from the first centuries of the Christian era, perhaps from many centuries earlier, the Indian Ocean served as a great highway of migration and trade, and the numerous colonial kingdoms of the Malay peninsula and archipelago that fully reproduced contemporary Indian conditions, and, in fact, formed an India across the seas, were the products of a steady maritime enterprise on the part of the peoples of India sustained over many generations. We do not yet know the full details of the story : what we know is enough to show that this enterprise 'had behind it no driving

force of politically powerful commercialism, no persistent state support for overseas expansion,[1] but was the natural efflorescence of the most creative period of Indian culture, a continuation of the process by which Southern India was Aryanised, and, let me add, the Aryans were Indianised. The details differ with time and locality; but the main trends are the same.

With this extended cultural empire of India the Cōḷas maintained active contact, and at least on one occasion they came into conflict with one of its most important states. The naval war between the Cōḷa empire and that of Śrīvijaya-Kaḍāram was a war between two rival sea powers, and forms an important chapter in the naval history of Ancient India.

The conception of *cakravartin* might have led to an all-India state, and in the Mauryan empire this condition was nearly attained. But the intense love of social and local autonomy on the part of the people forbade the rise of a centralised administration in state or empire. The pattern of peace-time life in ancient India was that of a number of closely-knit autonomous groups contributing, each in its measure, to a fairly rich and harmonious culture, richer and more harmonious perhaps than ever before or since, but maintained on somewhat slender means. The ruling classes, however, cherished, besides a passion for autonomy, a false ideal of glory which fostered a love of intrigue and a perverse desire for strife directed against their neighbours. The ideal of the political unity of the country formulated for a moment in Kauṭilya's conception of *cakravartikṣetram* was forgotten; we became too ready to lay hands on one another, and we fell.

I have reached the end, and I am conscious how imperfectly I have just sketched the outlines of a vast subject. I do not claim finality for anything I have said here. And it may well be that its very shortcomings may lead to more adequate efforts; and in that case, even this feeble attempt on my part would have served some purpose.

[1] Hudson, *China and Europe*.

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